

SECRET

8-5664

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT : Projected OSS TV Series

1. This memorandum suggests action on the part of DCI. Such requested action is contained in paragraph 12.
2. It has come to our attention that a certain Bill Eliscu, formerly aide to Colonel Glavin when the latter commanded the OSS in Italy, recently approached several television networks and independent film producers with the proposition of making documentary films of various of the OSS war-time exploits. Eliscu was allegedly identified and vouched for by a letter in his possession signed by a Henry Prescott, president of the organization known as the Veterans of the OSS, and written on the official paper of that society which carries on its letter-head the names of General William J. Donovan and other prominent personages. The letter purportedly states that Eliscu is authorized to negotiate such arrangements and proposes the production of a series of 39 television shorts of thirty minutes duration each.
3. As you are aware, General Donovan would be in a position to furnish a very considerable body of material from archives in his personal possession.
4. While we know that Eliscu's proposal was rejected by several major companies, he did succeed in interesting a New York Company known as Flamingo Films, about whose personnel, reputation, and previous activity we know little or nothing. The announcement that this company has, in fact, started production on such a series was published in the 14 November issue of the trade-weekly Variety (Tab B).
5. In the course of Eliscu's earlier rounds, his proposal came to the attention of Larry Lowman, now a vice-president of the Columbia Broadcasting System and at one time chief of Cammo for

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the OSS. Lowman, his curiosity piqued, called in John Masht, known by Lowman to be a friend of ours, and showed him the Prescott letter introducing Eliscu. Masht, in turn, brought the matter indirectly to our attention together with the advice that it was his understanding Eliscu had alleged personal acquaintance with you and implied, at least, your approval of the venture.

6. The success of the endeavor to arouse the interest of the television industry in such a proposal (although not in Eliscu's) is attested by a letter dated 29 August 1956 addressed by Leslie Harris, Vice President and General Manager of the Columbia Broadcasting System Television Film Sales Corporation, to one [redacted] an attorney with offices in the Southern Building in Washington D. C. The letter itself, which has reached us through secure channels, is attached (Tab A). In brief, it expresses Mr. Harris' very considerable interest in the proposition (if agreement can be reached to do such a series in cooperation with the Agency), and his own awareness of the sensitivity of the undertaking. It further suggests that "a meeting be arranged in the near future with Mr. Dulles or his close associates in the CIA to discuss the broad aspects of their public relations policy and to determine just how the relationship between the now defunct OSS organization and the present CIA should be handled." We are reliably advised that Mr. Harris, despite the announcement of the Flamingo production, is still interested in discussing the matter with us.

7. It is, of course, established practice of other U. S. government agencies to engage in public relations efforts through the medium of movie and television dramatization of actual episodes in which their personnel have participated in the course of their normally assigned duties. Such presentations ordinarily open with a brief announcement of the official sanction or sponsorship of the program by the Department concerned. Most notable of the television series currently showing (some of which have been continuously popular for several years) are:

- a. Navy Log--which opens with a display of the seal of the United States Navy.
- b. Federal Men--portraying the activities of the Secret Service of the Treasury Department.
- c. The West Point Story--sponsored by the Department of the Army.

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Other similar shows have at various times been authenticated and sponsored by the Air Force, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and others.

In addition to these authenticated documentaries, there are numerous popular series, commercially sponsored, depicting intelligence and other clandestine activities which carry with them no official authentication.

8. The objective of all such authenticated productions is the obvious one behind any public-relations or advertising program: to gain public support. Public support so far as official agencies of the U. S. Government is concerned is important from two points of view.

- a. As an incentive to recruiting personnel, and
- b. As it may be expected to influence favorably legislative support of the agency's program.

Such advantages might reasonably be expected to accrue to this Agency should we decide officially to support a presentation of the sort discussed.

9. As for the protocol which guides other agencies of our government in similar ventures, we have checked with the Department of Defense, and are advised that no formal regulations exist to authorize or control such activities, but that agreements are arrived at by informal and confidential discussion between responsible officials of the media and the agency concerned.

10. On the negative side, so far as this Agency is concerned, the possibility of over-stimulating public curiosity and providing excuses for criticism of or investigation into our present activities were the presentation in any way to be linked officially with the Agency is a danger which cannot be overlooked.

11. While it would not normally occur to us to interest ourselves in such activity, it is our belief that it would be preferable that any nation-wide exposition of the activities of the OSS be undertaken by a reputable company with our concurrence and assistance, rather than to be based upon the personal recollections and archives of any individual or group of individuals, or to be, or appear to be, endorsed by any other U. S. Government agency with which the OSS was affiliated or connected in the public mind. It seems possible that if Mr. Harris is, indeed, still interested in such a venture, an early announcement of the intent by the Columbia Broadcasting Company might operate to limit the sales market of the Flamingo productions to minor network or small independent stations.

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12. It is therefore recommended that you, accompanied by such of your staff as you may desire, agree to meet personally with Mr. Harris at a convenient but early date with a view to considering favorably collaboration in the production of a television series and the furnishing of script material in return for which you may request the close collaboration of our own selected personnel in the interest of the Agency and of national security.

FRANK G. WISNER
Deputy Director (Plans)

Attachments:

1. Letter addressed by Leslie Harris
2. Clipping entitled "Flamingo Series on OSS to Roll"

The recommendation in paragraph 12 is approved

[Redacted Signature Box]

Allen W. Dulles
Director of Central Intelligence

Date

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ER-8-8534

ER - File *to 12/6/56*

3 DEC 1956

MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Director (Plans)

25X1

**SUBJECT: Administrative Organization and Support of
Clandestine Services**

REFERENCES:

a.

b.

1. Regarding the request contained in paragraph 5 of your memorandum of 7 November, there has been no change in Agency organizational support policy. Furthermore, I find nothing in the Inspector General's report to support an affirmative answer to any of the questions posed in paragraph 4 of your memorandum.

2. As to the Inspector General's specific recommendation that an Administrative Officer position be established on the staff of the Deputy Director (Plans), it is requested that you and the Deputy Director (Support) discuss the matter and submit your recommendations to me.

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 NO CHANGES ☐
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 REPLY ☐

SIGNED

G. P. CANNELL
 Lieutenant General, USAF
 Deputy Director

cc: ID/S

CONCUR:

ER-ID/S:CEB:dle:1.3a
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/s/
L. K. WHITE
 Deputy Director
 (Support)
 29 November 1956

DP/P

EXECUTIVE SECRETARIAT

DA/S 56-4061

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MEMORANDUM FOR: Acting Deputy Director (Plans)

SUBJECT: Administrative Organization and Support of Clandestine Services

25X1

REFERENCES:



1. Regarding the request contained in paragraph 5. of your memorandum of 7 November, there has been no change in Agency organizational support policy. Furthermore, I find nothing in the Inspector General's report to support an affirmative answer to any of the questions posed in paragraph 4. of your memorandum.

2. As to the Inspector General's specific recommendation that an Administrative Officer position be established on the staff of the Deputy Director (Plans), it is requested that you and the Deputy Director (Support) discuss the matter and submit your recommendations to me.

C. P. CANNELL
Lieutenant General, USAF
Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

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CONCUR:

L. K. WHITE
Deputy Director
(Support)

NOV 9 1956

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ACTION		DIRECT REPLY	PREPARE REPLY
APPROVAL		DISPATCH	RECOMMENDATION
COMMENT		FILE	RETURN
CONCURRENCE		INFORMATION	SIGNATURE

Remarks:

Jim: The Director would like your comments on the attached. Since he is in all probability leaving for a short holiday on Friday, please let me have this back soonest.

STAT

*810-3 1161
with covering memo from
Col Grogan recommending not
to permit this.*

FOLD HERE TO RETURN TO SENDER	
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ROUTING AND RECORD SHEET

SUBJECT: (Optional)

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6 Dec 56

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FWD'D

OFFICER'S INITIALS

COMMENTS (Number each comment to show from whom to whom. Draw a line across column after each comment.)

1.

DCI

Admin 221

12/6

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2.

ER file

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ER: Please put this in file merely as a matter of record. The orig. is being held by IG along with supporting papers. Rita tells me that this document will not be signed by DCI as it is written - the matter has been taken up in Dep'ts. Meeting and will be discussed further.

Return all other copies to COP for disposition. Rita says COP is fully informed on this subject and the proposed actions, and the Dep's. Meetings discussions.



2/27

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